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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 07 TEL AVIV 005113

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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Gaza and Northern West Bank Disengagement

Key stories in the media:

All media bannered the first day of the forced eviction of Gaza Strip settlers. Yediot says that 6,000 settlers have left their Gush Katif homes without violence. The media reported that a prominent right-wing activist from the West Bank settlement of Kedumim was badly hurt Wednesday after setting herself on fire to protest the disengagement. Ha'aretz quoted senior officers in the IDF's Southern Command as saying they expect all of the Gaza Strip settlements to be evacuated by next Tuesday, and perhaps even by Sunday. The media reported that Kfar Darom, Shirat Hayam, and the synagogue compound in Neve Dekalim, where between 1,000 and 2,000 people are holed up, most of whom teens from outside the Gaza Strip, will be evacuated next. Yediot devotes its daily supplement, which -- akin to the other media -- is filled with photographic records of the evacuation, to a "day of tears." This morning, the electronic media reported that a soldier refused orders and was arrested.

All media reported that on Wednesday afternoon, Asher Weissgan, a resident of the West Bank settlement of Shvut Rahel, shot to death four Palestinians with whom he worked and wounded two others, one of them seriously, in the settlement of Shiloh. Israel Radio reported that PM Sharon condemned the killings, calling them a "grave terrorist act." Ha'aretz reported that top Sharon aide Dov Weisglass called PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas's senior advisor Rafiq Hussein to express Israel's regret over the incident. Leading media reported that Hamas and Islamic Jihad have vowed revenge. Major media reported that Abbas issued a statement in which he called on "the Palestinian public not to respond to provocations and not to provide any pretexts or excuses to those wishing to halt the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza." Leading media reported that U.S. State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack condemned the attack and called on the sides to show restraint.

Israel Radio quoted Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as saying in an interview with The New York Times that "something very dramatic is changing in the Middle East," but that Israel must also take confidence-building steps. Secretary Rice was also quoted as saying she expected the PA to take responsibility for disarming Hamas. Jerusalem Post reported that the U.S. administration will not present any new demands to Israel and the Palestinians before the disengagement process is complete. The newspaper quoted diplomatic sources in Washington as saying that the sole interest of the U.S. at this time is to see the withdrawal go through in a peaceful manner and that it will leave the "day after" issues to be dealt with when the process is over. Jerusalem Post reported that Members of Congress have begun to circulate a letter to the administration demanding that the U.S. not supply arms to the PA forces in Gaza. The letter, supported by Rep. Ileana

Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) and Elliot Engel (D-NY) calls on Secretary Rice not to provide the PA with weapons,

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because it has not yet proven its commitment to fight terrorism.

Israel Radio reported that two mortar shells fell last night on the Gush Katif settlement of Gadid. All media reported that security forces thwarted a terrorist attack by Islamic Jihad in Gush Katif. The would-be suicide-bomber and his dispatcher were arrested.

Citing AP, Ha'aretz quoted Israel's Ambassador to the U.S., Danny Ayalon, as saying Tuesday that Hamas is engaged in a massive buildup of manpower and weapons and that the PA must dismantle it. Leading media quoted Hamas political leader Khaled Mashal as saying in Beirut Wednesday that Israel's withdrawal from Gaza is an important achievement, but that it will not lead to Hamas's disarmament. Jerusalem Post highlighted Mashal's comment that the pullout is the beginning of the end for Israel.

Ha'aretz reported that the Interior Ministry is preparing to evacuate hundreds of foreign workers employed by Gush Katif settlers, whose forced evacuation began on Wednesday.

Ha'aretz reported that the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations issued a statement on Tuesday supporting the disengagement. The newspaper notes that the stance comes amid a long and sometimes heated debate among U.S. Jewish organizations in the U.S. regarding taking a stance on GOI policy. Jerusalem Post reported that the International Committee of the Red Cross resumed its field activities in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, after security guarantees regarding its operations were issued by the PA and others.

Maariv cited the results of a Teleseker poll:
-"How will the disengagement affect the Israeli economy?" Positively: 43.2 percent; negatively: 27.2 percent; it will not affect the economy: 17.2 percent; 12.4 percent were undecided.

Gaza and Northern West Bank Disengagement:

Summary:

Liberal contributor Prof. Tanya Reinhart wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "If the U.S. continues to lose in Iraq, we might well leave the West Bank, too."

Veteran columnist Yaron London wrote in the lead editorial of Yediot Aharonot: "The greater force [of the army and police], and not unconditional love, is the explanation for the sudden humility of the Settlers' Council leaders and their rabbis."

Columnist Evelyn Gordon wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "The UN, the EU, and the U.S. have all said openly in recent weeks that following the withdrawal, they expect Israel to move rapidly to realize the road map's plan.... None of the three has conditioned this demand on positive developments in Gaza following the pullout."

Senior Editor Nehemia Strassler wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The disengagement should be exploited to send a message of conciliation, of civil behavior. The British did not demolish, and neither did the Turks. Sharon should therefore stop the bulldozer today."

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized: " We do not have the slightest doubt that the worst person on the Left would have acted this way with the evacuated Gush Katif residents."

Block Quotes:

I. "This Is How Israel Left Gaza "

Liberal contributor Prof. Tanya Reinhart wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (August 18): "Bush won't give up Iraq so quickly. But he doesn't need the headache called Palestine that much. Early this year, the U.S. started pressuring [Israel]. At first, it quietly neutralized Israel's all-powerful

lobby in the United States.... It later froze military aid to Israel under the shadow of the crisis over weapons sales to China.... The declared date of the pullout from Gaza was approaching. Following preparations in Israel for a military operation, the U.S. administration became increasingly concerned that Sharon wouldn't implement the settlements' evacuation. According to an August 7 item in the New York Times, the Bush administration acted to prevent the [military] operation and to impose on Sharon the implementation of the withdrawal from the settlements.... Over time, we got used to viewing 'American pressure' as toothless declarations. But the phrase suddenly has a new meaning. When the U.S. truly pressures, no Israeli leader can even dream to oppose it (not even Netanyahu). This is how we left Gaza. If the U.S. continues to lose in Iraq, we might well leave the West Bank, too."

II. "Disengagement -- Temporary End"

Veteran columnist Yaron London wrote in the lead editorial of Yediot Aharonot (August 18): "A ... dangerous error that could take root in the [Israeli] public consciousness is that from the outset, the Settlers' Council did not plan to forcibly thwart the decision of the elected institutions. Due to the passion for national reconciliation and the admiration for the lack of bloodshed, many are inclined to adopt this interpretation of recent history.... The Settlers' Council [actually] called for an uprising against the government, and recruited all its organizational talents and all its troops for this purpose, but in the hour of truth it saw that the security forces were obedient to the government, and there was no point in persisting in the face of their overwhelming force. The greater force [of the army and police], and not unconditional love, is the explanation for the sudden humility of the Settlers' Council leaders and their rabbis. Imagine what would happen if the government had been seized by panic by their demonstrations and incitement, and if the security forces had not acted with wondrous skill. We have no doubt that in such a case, the rabbis and leaders of the uprising would have led to the collapse of the republic."

III. "From Beirut to Gush Katif"

Columnist Evelyn Gordon wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (August 18): "If there is one thing that the Lebanese pullout conclusively proved, it is that no ... diplomatic benefits will be forthcoming.... The UN, the EU, and the U.S. have all said openly in recent weeks that following the withdrawal, they expect Israel to move rapidly to realize the road map's plan for a Palestinian state in all of the West Bank, Gaza, and east Jerusalem. None of the three has conditioned this demand on positive developments in Gaza following the pullout. Moreover, pursuant to that goal, they have issued a series of specific concessions that they expect Israel to make immediately after the pullout. All of them potentially devastating to Israel's security. Yet even the U.S., traditionally both the most sympathetic to Israel's security concerns and the toughest on Palestinian terror, has declared that Israel must make these concessions even if the Palestinian Authority has not yet started taking action against the terrorist organizations.... Far from showing greater understanding for Israel's security needs following disengagement, the international community's response has been to demand that Israel concede all the safeguards most essential to its post-pullout security. But given the Lebanon precedent, that is hardly surprising. The only surprising part is that Sharon, or anyone lese, should ever have expected otherwise."

IV. "You Have to Read Sharon's Speech"

Senior Editor Nehemia Strassler wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (August 18): "In his dry and declamatory way, Ariel Sharon turned the Israeli reality on its head this week. In the speech that he delivered to the nation, he did not apologize to the settlers (the truth is that they should be apologizing to the citizens of Israel, who were forced to pay -- monetarily and in human terms -- for the expensive adventure in Gaza). He spoke words of truth that no prime minister before him ever dared to say. For the first time, we heard the reason for the shift in his position: demography. It is demography that forced the evacuation of Gaza on anyone wishing to live in a state with a Jewish majority and who is not prepared to rely on the messiah.... Sharon's speech indicates that he has very belatedly reached the obvious conclusion that the immense gap between the villas and the tin shacks

would end with a huge explosion, a bloodbath, and this is what he wishes to prevent.... He [also] opened the door to the continuation of the process [in the West Bank].... At this point, Sharon has the opportunity to stop the demolition of the 2,000 homes in the evacuated settlements. Why destroy a means of production that can slightly reduce the poverty and suffering?.... The disengagement should be exploited to send a message of conciliation, of civil behavior. The British did not demolish, and neither did the Turks. Sharon should therefore stop the bulldozer today."

IV. "Sickly Lack of Sensitivity"

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized (August 18): "The Guinness Book of World Records will chronicle Sharon as a person and a Jew who demonstrated the greatest lack of sensitivity toward good and honest citizens who have been stricken by a terrible personal/family tragedy -- the Gush Katif residents.... We do not have the slightest doubt that the worst person on the Left would have acted this way with the evacuated Gush Katif residents.... Intoxicated by fate, people armed with pens are instilling poison against the salt of the earth.... Their gaping eyes and alcohol-impregnated brains haven't even started to count the 'Oslo Accord' dead. They are the false messiahs of illusory peace, who are about to bring upon us a terrible catastrophe."

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